

CIA 503.1

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More openness for CIA

There is a new and welcome sense of openness being displayed by the Central Intelligence Agency. An example was the recent appearance in San Diego, Calif., of CIA Director Stansfield Turner in which he discussed CIA operations candidly before a public audience.

Turner's appearance is part of a frank bid for public support to counter negative criticism that has plagued the nation's intelligence-gathering community for the past several years.

Part of Turner's public-relations campaign involves outlining the system of checks and balances that have been established to monitor CIA activities. The system includes two congressional oversight committees and a special three-man Intelligence Oversight Board. They are there to guard against the sort of abuses that were revealed during the Watergate investigations.

Still, even in this new era of

openness, spies are necessary and a degree of secrecy must be exercised if the nation is to protect itself from foreign enemies. It is unrealistic to believe that America would not be harmed if an unfriendly nation could easily learn our secrets.

It is this message—that intelligence activity is essential for the wellbeing of the nation—that Turner is trying to get across to the American people.

There is the danger, of course, that more candor and openness by the intelligence community will increase the potential for leaks, thereby perhaps jeopardizing some espionage efforts. It is a risk that will have to be taken.

By allowing more light to shine on CIA activities, Director Turner is taking the necessary step toward gaining a renewal of the public support that is needed if our intelligence apparatus is to be effective.